Words by the Wayside

James Rhoades

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By James Rhoades

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NOTE

The contents of this volume, which forms the third series of the Author's shorter poems, are with a few exceptions collected from "The Times," "The Fortnightly Review," "The Speaker," "The Westminster Gazette," "The Daily News," and "The Court Journal," and are here reprinted by the kind permission of the respective Editors.

Sovereignty

When erst in Jewry stood the King of Kings,
For mockery robed in purple, crowned with thorn,
Glory beyond the pomp of earthly things
Broke through the mean disguise of human scorn :

And power that stoops, and weakness that is strength,
And sovereignty, no more a splendid sin,
Flashed on a world bewildered, taught at length
To seek the signs of honour from within.

So kingly service earned the right to reign,
And lords of earth who claim the bended knee,
Throned in their State, might nevermore disdain
The burden-bearers of the world to be.

Envy them not : amid the glittering show
How irketh kings their greatness who shall ken ?
Never alone, what loneliness they know,
What yearning for the simple lives of men !

Under the search-light of the world's vast eye,
That sweeps his path, each trivial act to scan—
Nay, deep into his secret soul would pry—
He must be manful who shall play the man,

Who, bare to every censure random-hurled,
No crowd to screen him, can erect and free
Stand out against the sky-line of the world,
Invulnerable in his integrity,

Can in great issues serve or sway the State,
  Lord of his own, yet of his own the thrall,
And, set without the barriers of debate,
  Through the loud clamour of the Council-hall,

Can yet a nation's nobler heart-beat hear,
  Arm for the right, or, touched with human woe,
Trim Mercy's trembling balance with a tear—
  Nor self-mistrust nor self-elation know.

Spare then your flattery, speed them with your prayers;
  And here in London, while the joy bells ring,
While the crowds gather, and the trumpet blares,
  Cry we " God strengthen, as God save, the King!"

For though with heaven and loyal hearts to aid,
  This weight of Empire may be bravely borne,
Purple is weary wear, when all is said,
  The crown, though golden, edged with inward thorn.

August, 1902.

Coronation Ode

(*For August 9th*, 1902).

Lo ! As from Winter, Spring,
As out of darkness, day,
As earth and everything—
The world's old way—
Leaps to regeneration from decay,
So from the corpse-like chrysalis of grief
Doth sunny joy take wing ;
So to an orphaned people's travailing
At last relief.
Now all the long-pent fountains of the land
Break forth and sing ;
Changed is our bitter bread
By time's sweet leaven ;
The streets breathe music, gaily garlanded ;
The loud-tongued steeples swing ;
While beneath other stars, on many a strand
Sea-severed, but by love of England spanned
As with a rainbow, myriads gathering
From the four winds to the four winds of Heaven
Acclaim, acclaim the crowning of the King.

No trivial Act rehearsing in men's sight,
Moves the great pageant on :
It is the Mystery of a nation's might ;
It is the soul of ages that are gone,
Which clad in glittering hues,
And to the eye of day
Flaunting, but inly glorified, pursues
A path more sacred than the Sacred Way,
To loftier heights Capitoline,
And a more lasting sovereignty than thine,

O mighty Rome !
For thou full many a dome
To many a god didst build,
But at the last, with wantonness fulfilled,
To Wealth and Pride :
Whereby that puissant spirit, which from the womb
Thy birth-right was, within thee sank and died :
Building to these, thou buildedst thine own tomb,
But he shall find, who seeks,
That ever, from of old,
Through failure and backslidings manifold,
With inborn virtue graced,
Nor utterly by love of wealth debased,
Keen, when oppression speaks,
The cause to try,
More nobly none,
Humane in victory,
To freedom and to justice—those twin peaks—
Britain hath upward won.

Scion of Alfred, what a realm is thine !
A universe beside his petty sway !
What ocean breaks not on some isle or shore
That doth thy rule obey ?
On whose vast bounds Hyperion in a day
Cannot, for all his haste, make shift to shine,
But onward posting finds them still before !
Through seas asleep
Round half a world thy bitted lightnings leap :
Who shall confine thee, who shall say thee nay,
When, dragon-like, on some dread errand sent,
In adamantine scales armipotent,
Thy thunder-breathing warders daunt the deep ?
Thine from the Arctic to Vancouver's Isle,
Thine east to Labrador,

From the sky-shouldering Himalayan steep
Southward, to where Tasmanian waters smile
In many a sandy bay,
And that vast Commonwealth of States——But
stay!
Idly, methinks, we boast
Thy power from sea to sea, from coast to coast:
If this indeed be all, all is not well:
If in the dawn of doing it befell,
While others slumbered, or stretched limbs to rise,
England rose early and made haste to build,
Can this alone exalt us to the skies?
Is this
Thy sceptre's greatness? Then how small was his
Whose fame the world a thousand years hath filled,
Yea, and for yet a thousand will not wane,
Who shared his parcelled England with the Dane!
Nay, but, O King, thou knowest who wears of right
The robe of majesty
Must inward of the Eternal Counsels be,
And of their Order Knight;
Fearless, or but of flatterers afraid;
Whose favour to men's conscience is a spur,
Whose wrath a blade
Keen as Excalibur;
Who, day by day remembering to be great,
Arrays his soul, grown weary of the weight,
In wise humility;
Bending from his high place to serve the State,
As Honour's self immaculate,
Master of all,
God's thrall.

E'en such a sovereignty of soul was hers
Who now in love looks down on thee,

And with maternal smile
Watches, the while
Earth's mightiest empire in God's name confers
Sceptre and crown on thee—
Crown that she wore,
And sceptre that she bore,
To her bequeathed
In ageless honour wreathed,
And now
Thrice consecrated from her hand and brow.
Nor dimmed by distance, or less pure, appears
That august spirit, who left the throne forlorn,
And for long years
Turned the sweet waters of her life to tears,
Her diadem to thorn.
If to be good is to be great,
No victor-potentate
Of east or west
That name hath worthier won,
Than he, whose benediction now doth rest
On thee, his son.

These hail thee from afar,
Bright luminaries that nevermore can set
In memory's heaven. But, close beside thee yet,
With undimmed radiance shines,
Amid the circling signs
That sprinkle life's dark firmament with light,
Thy Morning-Star.
No sun-reflecting, moon-cold satellite,
But self-resplendent, may her gracious ray,
To glad thee, still above the horizon stay—
In this than Alfred happier, to thy gain
Sharing a peaceful empire with the Dane!

What sudden silence holds the gazing crowd,
A moment since so loud ?
The air grows dense
With forms impalpable to mortal sense :
Dim presences about us we divine—
Husbands and sons, who from the shores of strife
To sire and wife
Returned not, but of that deep anodyne
Drank, and became
A memory and a name :
The storm-voiced trumpet breathes a tenderer tone,
And a great heart-thrill shakes yon armèd line :
For here about thee, bone of England's bone,
Upstand the living walls that guard thy throne,
Our home-bred heroes, and amongst them who,
Brave as the giant-brood,
Storming not heaven but hell,
Beneath that sultry glare
The myriad-hissing hidden death withstood,
Did what a man may do,
And dared what men may dare,
And faltered not, and, mute as those that fell,
Of their own doing have no word to tell.
Ah ! if we, too, be mute,
It is that strong emotion cannot reach
The folding gates of speech,
But tears the timely utterance will dispute :
Yet the heart utters what no ear hath heard,
The still unspoken word
We may not raise
From the deep wells of gratitude and praise.

And here from far away,
To crown thy crowning-day,
Behold the men of our own race and tongue,

Peerless of heart and deed,
Who in our country's need
As sons did aid her, soul to kindred soul
Turning, as turns the needle to the Pole,
Or as Pacific currents, southward swung,
Past Valparaiso, past Magellan borne,
Rounding the Horn,
Stream upward by Fuego : even so
To her, to the one Mother, whence we sprung,
Their hearts went homing, drawn from long ago.

Nor fewer, nor less fain
With honour to renown thee, in thy train,
From realms allied,
Ambassador and princely delegate
Of Kaiser and of King, or Sovereign State,
In marshalled order ride—
Symbols of peace inviolate,
Which our sons' sons shall see,
When o'er the nations' face
Envy in sullen mood
Hath ceased to brood,
And race with race
To nobler ends united, sane and free,
Build up the great World-Commonwealth to be.

Peace ! they are past : and lo ! within the shrine
The King, the Queen,
Kneeling between
Those buried heroes of his glorious line !
Let us, too, kneel, and say
" Not only, and not most, with might to war,
Or with his realm's increase,
But with uplifted people, but with peace—
Peace which at last, at last

Shall still the trumpet-blast—
Crown him, we cry Thee, that all kindreds may
Laud him and love, who dwell beneath his star ;—
But with fulfilment of the task begun
By his far-travelled son,
More close to bind
Our closely-knit communion, kind with kind ;—
But with beneficent strength
Which shall at length—
As in his royal heart the kindling ray
Now quickens into day—
Dawn on the sunless brotherhoods of men,
And humanise the home, and purge the den,
And stay the wing'd battalions of disease :
With the pure lustre of such gracious things—
Regalia from thy spirit-palaces—
Crown him, All-Father, who art King of Kings,
Crown him with these ! "

The Mirror of Spring

I.

When hyacinths the wood-ways through
Spill over into pools of blue,
And on the grassy slope have laid
Their mantle of the sky-roof made,
When meadow-farers' feet stir up
The gold-dust of the buttercup,
And daisy-drifts the livelong day
Make every field a milky way
With myriads that out-star the night ;
When the wide earth in one delight
Laughs upward to the laughing skies,
And feathered folk make melodies ;
When orchard-boughs in apple-blow
Turn shower and sun to rosy snow,
And all the chestnut-lamps are lit,
And bird and beast have joy of it :
When laughter lurks in hazel eye,
And lads grow bolder, maids more shy,
While crazy limbs forget to ache,
Crept forth the sunny air to take ;
When cuckoo calls, and banks are gay,
And hedge-scent heavy with sweet may—
O heart, put off thy winter-cheer,
For Spring, for Spring, at last is here !

II.

What comfort ? Can she bring us back
The smile we miss, the arms we lack,
Or we for her sweet sake forget
The desolation, the slow fret

That undermines all happiness ?
Ah ! could the eye pierce inward, yes ;
Ah ! might the radiance of the Spring
But fire our dull imagining
To feel that flower and stream and star
But tokens of the Eternal are
Hid in our heart of heart ; that each
Hath soul-immensities that reach
Far down beneath these shadowy dreams
To that which is, through that which seems,
Where those enfranchised spirits shine
Who, seeing, are themselves divine,
And, made immortal, have their part
And portion with the pure in heart—
That such their semblance, such their voice,
Such rapture doth their soul rejoice—
Then in this vital ecstasy
Of earth and air we too might see,
As in a mirror, faint and pale,
The Life that is behind the Veil.

An Epitaph

THESE bones, this dust, were once (believe who can)
A living man :
What lived within this dust (believe who will)
Is living still.
These bones shall leap and walk another day,
(Believe who may)
And, with belief,
Who may, will, can, go soothe some mourner's grief.

Lips and Eyes

O THOSE lips,
And the pert young pout o' them !
Red rose hips
Are but pale, I vow, to them :
Yet little bliss
You'll reap, I doubt, o' them :
Ask one kiss,
And No drops out o' them.

O those eyes,
And the restless rove o' them !
Love's dart flies
From the bows bent over them—
Dart upon dart,
No shield to cover them !
My fond heart
Fell dead for love o' them.

To Haileybury

O School beloved, like some old fairy-tale
Rife with the haunting charm of vanished hours,
Who now a nymph appearest, flushed with flowers
And serenaded of the nightingale,
Now as some Spartan mother stern and pale,
Pointing to death for duty ! all our powers
Are dedicate to thee ; thy name is ours ;
We are thy children who here bid thee hail.

Living or dead, one host from land and sea
Gathered, men famous, men who toiled obscure,
Or fought for country, priests, and poets pure—
Thy hand, thy star controlled them. O should we
Drift aimless of the end, vouchsafe to be
At once our pilot and our Cynosure !

Haileybury College Jubilee

Texite virtutis, suboles mea, texite telam.

She stood beside the loom of Life, and said,
" Weave, O my children ! " and they wove her there
A battle-banner, shaping it four-square
With many a dark and many a flashing thread
Drawn from the spools of Time : the shuttle sped,
Blending brave effort, hearts that soared in prayer,
Faith, failure, triumph, courage in despair,
As still hands living caught it from hands dead.

So travailed they while fifty years went by,
Till worthy worship was the thing they wove,
And perfumed o'er with lavender of love.
And now, " O Mother mine, and mine," they cry—
For the web frays not, and the colours hold—
" Thy glorious ensign to the winds unfold ! "

A Triolet

Nothing in the world so sweet
As the first white violet
Hidden in its coy retreat !
Sweet as love when lovers meet,
Sweet as ghosts of love that greet
Lovers who have never met !
Nothing in the world so sweet
As the first white violet !

Dives Up To Date

Dives of old was damned for heeding not
Poor Lazarus at his palace-gate who lay :
Not to be rich, but ruthless, was his blot ;
How gained his ill-spent riches who shall say ?

Our Dives doth his wealth from beggars wring—
The hire of dens where scarce a beast would bed—
So not himself but others likening
To Him who had not where to lay his head.

For Freedom of Speech

If right the cause, no counter-challenge fear,
If wrong, the sterner foe, the truer friend :
Free-judged, thy rightness will the more appear,
Or swift repentance prove the saner end :
For the loose shafts of slander—let them fly ;
Justice stands scathless in her panoply.

Flowers and Birds

ARE flowers the very thoughts of God
  Made visible to bless?
If so it be, O happy ye
  Who such a faith confess,
As led by April blossom-crowned
  Ye roam o'er vale and hill,
With every here a cowslip found,
  And there a daffodil!

Are the birds' songs but jets of joy
  From the eternal Bliss?
If it be true, O happy few
  With such a faith as this,
As thrilled by many a feathered throat
  Ye roam o'er hills and vales,
With every now the cuckoo's note,
  And then the nightingale's!

To a Certain Doctor

"I'm only a doctor," is your cry,
"Concerned with the body's ills and maims,
But witless of art or poesy,
And lost to the spirit's finer aims."

Ay, only a hand by hundreds blest,
A heart that has ached for all save self,
A brain racked ever to find them rest,
A soul whose riches are scorn of pelf.

In vain we argue; the theme is old:
Some men love horses, some singing birds;
But, e'en if the poet's song ring gold,
Shall deeds that are gold weigh less than words?

You waived the pleasure, and wooed the strife,
Of thorns, not roses, have made your bed;
You longed for the lovely side of life,
And fought with the terrible instead—

Longed sore, but never had time to give,
Till now it is all too late, you say:
So be it: why, man, the life you live
Is one long poem from day to day.

In April

In April, with love elate
The cuckoo-bird called his mate,
Cuckoo !
And murmuring some fond name,
Colin with face aflame
Whispered across the gate
To you.

No heart but was heaved and stirred
At sound of the babbling bird,
Cuckoo :
But, sweet though his herald-cry
Floating o'er field and sky,
Sweeter was Colin's word
To you.

The Spring of Life

I WANDERED long in lonely ways,
  Till on my path she flashed and stood
With winsome air and haunting gaze,
  A very May of maidenhood.
Soft winds athwart my spirit blew,
  The frozen pulse began to beat,
And slowly in my heart I knew
    That love is sweet.

Then sudden to my lips there came
  The all-awakening word divine ;
I whispered it, I breathed her name,
  She raised her gentle eyes to mine ;
I saw them dim with tender doubt
  And virginal imagining ;
And all my wintry heart cried out
    The Spring ! the Spring !

Molly's Folly

Molly from the milking comes
In the sweet May weather ;
Someone meets her in the lane,
And they walk together.

Someone has a sheepish look
As of love inside him ;
Molly turns her face away,
Frowns, as if to chide him.

Someone has a shaky voice :
" Once you seemed to love me ;
Molly, won't you try again—
Think a little of me ? "

At the gate she stops ; an arm
Round her waist is stealing ;
Molly shrinks and makes no sign ;
Is she lost to feeling ?

When her cottage-home she gains—
Molly sure a goose is—
Of the tears that drown her heart
She unlocks the sluices :

" Why, O cruel tongue," she cries,
So with silence flout him ?
Who's to tell him, if not you,
I should die without him ? "

" Robin "

WHAT do you make of it, Robin the red ?
Earth, wind, and water say summer is dead :
Summer is dead, they sigh, wailing forlorn ;
You—you make mirth of it, perched on the thorn !

Leaves in air battling with armies unseen,
Mowed down by myriads rain gold on the green ;
Chimney-throats roaring and forest-tops curled,
Shriek " This is winter born into the world."
Storms rock his cradle, and death strews his way,
You—you make sport of it, perched on the spray !

Armed with his icy breath, killing he goes ;
Look at yon withered skull, once 'twas a rose !
All the wild forest-pipes cease, stricken dumb ;
Hushed the lark's carol, and hushed the bee's hum ;
Stark lies the river, and mute stands the mill ;
You—you make songs of it, perched on the sill !

Teach me the secret, I'll tell not the rest,
What fairy furnace glows warm in thy breast ?
Ah ! would crumbs win thee to perch here and stay—
Perch in my heart and sing, Robin the gay !

Among the Hills

" WHAT seek ye here among the hills,
What guerdon of their giving ? "—
Release from sordid care that kills,
Free hearts and heaven-attempered wills,
A life superior to life's ills
On higher heights of living.

" Where pause the mountains, to the plain
By green gradations bending,
With passionate eyes that upward strain,
What vision seek ye here in vain ? "—
Loved forms we shall not find again
Till earth with heaven be blending.

" Amid the mists, below the slope,
To yon dark valley roving,
What fear impels you, or what hope ? "—
With loss, with loneliness to cope,
Through anguish and despair we grope
To deeper depths of loving.

Matins

As out of slumber my thoughts came winging,
And blent their notes with the bird-notes ringing
Under the lattice beneath the eaves,
One sweet thought, as my heart believes,—
Was it a thought, or was it a thrush
That had roosted nigh to God all night ?—
Sang so loudly for pure delight,
That the rest cried " Hush !
Let us to sleep and dream again,
If we too haply may catch the strain ! "
So into silence back they crept,
Heads under downy wings, and slept ;
Then it ceased, and the dawn was dumb,
And I must wait till the morrow come.
But what if the singer for some sweet sake
Forget to carol, or I to wake ?
For in all my lifetime till to-day
I never knew what a bird could say—
How a thrush—or was it a thought ?—could sing
Of God and Spring.

"O Fortunatos Nimium, Sua si Bona Nôrint!"

THERE'S a fountain in a valley that I know
Where the waters lisp a secret as they flow,
And the hart's-tongue lolling from its cavern-cell
Hath the secret on its tip, but may not tell.

Past the skill of earth to utter, man to guess,
The hid wisdom which to know were happiness:
But at times there needs no telling; everywhere
It besets us and embraceth as the air.

All that valley side is full of it: the breeze
Wafts the burden as it filters through the trees,
And you bruise it from the bracken, and its scent
In the heather, as you breathe it, is content:

And the peace of God descending on the soul—
Every discord hushed in one harmonious whole—
Whispers "Love shall be for ever, death's dark strife
But an eye-wink of the sleepless lids of life."

Happy fountain! happy valley! happy folk,
If their heart to its own happiness awoke—
Rose to rapture from mere ignorance of ill!
Yet the spirit of the stream is with them still:

There's a ripple in their laughter as they go,
There's a dancing in their eyes, and well I know
Though they carol not, O stream, it needs must be
There is music in their heart who dwell by thee.

To the Garden of My Soul

Didst thou, my soul, with thoughts for flowers,
Divinely as this garden glow,
What wealth were thine in sunless hours,
What peace when storms of winter blow!

What airs of heaven thy leaves would shake
That now droop spiritless and dumb,
And Oh! what answering whispers wake
In hearts that know not whence they come!

Where gloomy shades around them close,
And the pale petals earthward turn,
Thy love should light the enraptured rose,
Or bid the constant sun-flower burn.

Now toss they 'neath the tempest's flail,
Now sink in numbness of despair,
Thy joy, thy peace, should still the gale,
Or vitalise the stagnant air.

In the Medici Chapel

The Dawn-God droops ; Twilight with haggard eye
Sickens ; a nameless horror daunts the air ;
Day bursts abortive, to confront despair ;
Night lieth lid-fast, lest of sight she die.
O marble Griefs, some fallen Majesty
Of earth bewail ye ? Nay, but when or where
Sprang woman-born, save One, whose pang to share
Made shake the Elements, and paled the sky ?

Think not to read this wonder-work of woe,
Hewn from a Titan's heart : yon brow sublime
Broods over it inscrutable : but know
Here plants his foot upon the neck of Time,
Avenged of Day and Darkness, Dusk and Prime,
The great grieved soul of Michael Angelo.

At Perugia

THE young moon mounts ; day fades from off the
plain ;
No colour of man's naming hath this sky :
Thrilled with the Beatific Vision nigh,
So passes a pure spirit without pain.
Like billows of a never-breaking main,
The Umbrian Apennines hang poised on high
Snow-crested : yonder doth Assisi lie,
Lov'd shrine whereof the whole world's heart is fain.

So there from hill to hill was wont to wend,
And heal, and teach, and touch with living fire,
Francis, God's Saint, six hundred years ago !
And thou and I have six poor days to spend,
Tread back the past, and to yon heights aspire—
Move slow, dear earth, about the sun, move slow !

At Assisi

I

Not thus should he be sepulchred, not thus—
Almsman of God, and spouse of Poverty—
Where fane crowns fane, a pillared praise on high,
By Masters of renown made glorious.
So men of old revered him : but to us
Strange and unmeet it seems that he should lie
Where day by day with travel-jaded eye
Crowds turn to gaze, and critic-tongues discuss.

For pomp and splendour irked him : a bare shrine
Rude and rock-bedded—the blue dome above—
Sufficed his soul for worship : he did love
To talk with birds and flowers, nor seldom trod
Far from man's haunt the cloud-cowled Apennine,
To be alone with God—alone with God.

II

To stoop in self-abasement to the earth,
Not to need happiness, to shun no pain,
In weakness to find strength, in losses gain,
All things in nothingness, and wealth in dearth,
Yea, and by daily death win spirit-birth—
The Vision of the Unseen to sight made plain—
Saint of Assisi, though men doubt thee sane,
This was thy wisdom, this thy glorious worth.

O Lowliness of soul, whose inward sway
Is Peace and Resignation, with the slow
Sure backward-ebbing of the waves of woe,
Henceforth and from this hour do thou, we pray,
Sit at the heart's helm, pilot us our way,
As from the known to the unknown we go !

A Vicarage Garden

I LOVE your garden's green repose,
  Shut safe from outer dust and din,
The jet your wayward fountain throws,
  The fish beneath of golden fin ;

The sweep of sward, the beds of bloom,
  The stately cedar's solemn shade,
The arched lime-alley's cloistral gloom
  For lonely meditation made ;

The terraced walk, the ivied wall,
  The music of the floundering mill,
And, like an arm embracing all,
  The ridge of Chiltern's chalky hill.

Here, faithful to her wedded vows,
  All day the mother-thrush will sit,
Wee masons toil among the boughs,
  Or tiny lovers flirt and flit ;

And sometimes, from his reedy bound
  Borne faintly past the poplar-stems,
Comes, half a silence, half a sound,
  The murmur of the travelled Thames.

Yes, happy bowers, I love you well,
  Not least I love you for that here
Sage wisdom and the Graces dwell,
  With mirth and hospitable cheer ;

While hope and aspiration bright,
  And faith, with eyes upon the goal,
And love of all things fair, unite
  To deck a garden for the soul ;

Where those perennial fountains spring,
  That in the heart's waste places play,
And on dead Summer's face can fling
  The smile of everlasting May.

Life's Twilight

As at the close of a long summer's day,
When the sun's loss hath left the world in doubt,
There is no darkness, for the stars steal out,
Bright harbingers of his returning ray,
So in the twilight of life's evening gray
Glimpses of God within the soul devout
Pierce, penetrate the shades that close about
Time's darkening dome, and shine our fears away.

O may my age be as that summer's eve,
That I may gently lay the body by
Like some dear outworn garment which men grieve
A little to have done with! O may I,
As the years gather, in this faith be bold—
There is no death, nor can the soul grow old!

At the Omar Khayyám Club

I

Lo ! Sun and Summer to the South have fled,
Yet here are flowers, the White Rose and the Red !
Haste, then, for who can clip the Wings of Time ?
And crown the Wine-Cup, as the Master said !

What crowns the Cup of Man's Desire who knows ?
One saith " On Wealth and Leisure to repose " ;
One with the cowled Assisan fain would teach
" Toil is Life's Wine, and Poverty the Rose."

" Nay," quoth another, " What wild talk is this
Here in a World where some would kill, some kiss,
Some scour the Earth, some sail the windy Sky,
And all to play at Hoodman-blind with Bliss

Who still outwits them, Fool alike and Wise ?
Say rather ' Vanity of Vanities !
There is no Crowning of the Heart's Desire ! ' "
But Omar smiling, Cup in Hand, replies :

" Here is Nepenthe, here all Cares forget !
Sweet is this Lawn with wild Thyme dewy-wet,
And sweet in Dream to wander, as we pass
From Nothingness to Nothingness." And yet

Majestic Shade, what marvel if well nigh
Hereof we dare to doubt thee, dare to sigh,
With Souls yet vibrant to thy deathless Strain,
" Can that which did beget the Immortal die ? "

II

Now the veiled Watchers of the labouring Moon
With never-wearying Service none too soon
  Have hid the still-born Summer Months from sight,
And Baby Winter 'gins to kick and croon.

Happy the Man who can with us forget
The Seasons' Difference, or the ruder Threat
  Of Warrior-Wordsmen eager for the Fray,
Impoverished Peer, impetuous Suffragette.

In this sequestered Garden of the Soul,
Heedless who finds not, or who finds, the Pole,
  We pin our Faith upon Frascati's *Cook*,
Or toast a *Peri* while we tilt the Bowl.

Then, Eyes and Ears expectant, as to greet
Some Lord of Art or eloquence, how sweet
  To list the Fountain-Play of Fancy plash
In golden Words where Wit and Wisdom meet,

Or think of those, the unforgotten Great
Whom here with empty Glass we celebrate,
  And marvel whether such as these were made
To be but Shuttlecocks of Time and Fate!

Omar such Stuff as the Wind scattereth!
Fitzgerald Dust! We disbelieve thee, Death,
  And, maugre thy loud Boastings of the Past,
Wait what the Future and the Silence saith.

1909.

My Dachshund

THREE foot of high-bred beauty black and tan,
Low-bodied, bandy-legged, with out-turned toes
Waddling, twelve inches from the ground she goes,
Yet nearer heaven than many a proper man,
If love can lift her. Let who doubts it scan
The mute soul mirrored in her glance when glows
The heart behind it, and brute-nature grows
Too noble for a thing so brief of span.
How paint the sullen look wherethrough peeps, shy
Affection, the spasmodic ecstasies,
The puzzled puckers of her brow? Dear beast!
Egyptian hieroglyph she surely is,
Or else quaint Indian idol—mine at least,
For her idolater till death am I.

" She "

MARK, stone, the spot for longing eyes
Where she, the dachshund-darling lies,
For fourteen years our pride and pet,
Now evermore our fond regret !
Good-night, belov'd ! may some sweet gleam
Of field or fireside haunt thy dream !
We lay thee amid ferns and flowers,
The still'd small life that sweetened ours,
And leave thee for thine own to keep
Earth's two best blessings—love and sleep.

" Buss-Dhu "

The White Skye.

SWEET little comrade whom we cannot see,
Eight years our day-long solace and delight,
Safe in our love thou livest ; O that we
Could with our loving love thee back to sight !

The Heart of the Thorn

CRUEL the rose-tree thorn !
  Who grasps will rue it :
But have ye seen at morn
  The sun shine through it ?

Then, though the fell point feign
  With hate to hide it,
Tender the warm heart-stain
  That glows inside it.

Who 'mid the thorns of life
  To life's sun turneth,
Hid in the heart of strife
  Love's hue discerneth :

Happy, though fate-accurst,
  Who so can find it—
See through the sad world's worst
  God's best behind it.

From Sully Prudhomme

" Ah ! si vous saviez."

Ah ! knew you how forlorn and drear
Beside an empty hearth to sigh,
Sometimes, my dwelling-place to cheer,
You would pass by.

Knew you the power that one pure glance
To sorrow-laden soul can lend,
Up to my windows, as by chance,
A look you'd bend.

Knew you what springs of solace rise
In heart to human heart drawn nigh,
You'd seek my threshold sister-wise,
And sit thereby.

But knew you that I love, and how
'Tis death or life your love to win,
You'd simply ope the door, I trow,
And enter in.

Winter

WINTER, what boon that we should hold thee dear,
Who comest with desolation on thy wing,
And all the ghosts of summer wandering
Lost in the sunless limbo of the year ?
Shortener of days and darkener of our sphere,
When flowers are quenched and wood-birds cease to sing,
What boon for all these losses dost thou bring ?—
Hope, that sways mightier than fruition here.

Hail to thee, then, austere Sterility,
Whose dearth revives the glutted heart's desire,
Nor cloys with having ! Yea, though time be long
And warm winds tarry, dear enough to me
Thy sheath-imprisoned seeds of unborn fire,
And disenchanted Oracles of song.

The Message of the Christmas Bells

WHAT is this tale the Church-tower tells
To the white country-side ?
I hear six golden syllables—
" 'Tis Christ's Eternal Tide."

How then of death and sorrow deem,
Of anger, lust, and pride ?
These are not, though to thee they seem :
'Tis Christ's Eternal Tide.

Good only Is : if thou so will,
Thou may'st in Good abide :
Awake thee from thy dream of ill
To Christ's Eternal Tide !

On dark misdoubting turn the page ;
Be certitude thy guide
That in thee lies the golden age
Of Christ's Eternal tide.

O matchless truth ! O mystery
By the blind world belied !
Nor was, nor is, nor is to be,
Save Christ's Eternal Tide !

The Christmas Message

THERE is only Infinite Goodness, Infinite Love :
Nor thrall art thou to Sorrow, nor heir to Sin,
For the earth, O Man, is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,
And Doubt the only Devil who walks therein.

One Way of Life, though the ways of death be seven :
Nor Eastward nor Westward look, that Way to win,
For amidst thee, O Man, is the very Heaven of Heaven
And He that hath slain the Slayer is housed therein.

An Easter Message

THROUGH the gates again that harshly closing
Hid from me a life more dear than mine—
Left her with the lonely dead reposing,
Lid-fast eyes that nevermore may shine—
How the rebel griefs came backward thronging,
Slew my soul beneath their withering fire,
All the aching void and all the longing
Of a quenchless love's untamed desire!
Till I cried, "O Thou in whom we trust,
Thou who canst, uplift her from the dust,
Heal her sickness, staunch her every tear!"

* * * *

And a sudden Glory shone, which said
"Seek no more for that which is not here;
Those that loved are with Me, have no fear;
I AM HE THAT LIVETH AND WAS DEAD"

The Way of Life

"ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι."

SHADOW of wings on the window-curtain,
Push of life in the pear-tree bough,
Buds long hesitant, leaves uncertain,
Softly murmuring, "Now, now, now!"
Eyes of love from the past that beckon—
Beckon from where no past can be!—
And, spite of winters I scarce dare reckon,
Youth and Spring at the heart of me!

Now while the loud-lipped ages thunder
"This frail body must soon to sleep,"
Whose is the still, small voice, I wonder,
Whispers, "Was it not thine to keep?"
Truth stands sentry at Life's wide portal;
Could but his thoughts to Life cling true,
Man e'en now were of mould immortal;
Let him be wise and win thereto!

Knowledge-fashioned and Law-surrounded,
Framed o'er nature to rule sublime,
Firm as the rock beneath thee founded
Wouldst thou smile at the tides of time—
Dread no menace of fiend infernal,
Powers of the earth, or stars above—
Tune thy soul to the tones eternal,
Faith Omnipotent, Wisdom, Love.

Though my words but awake your laughter,
Though men sicken and die to-day,
Yet shall those to be born hereafter
Seek, persèver, and find the Way.

How should the world's illusion blind him,
  How catch tripping the toils of sin—
Man, made ware of the Might behind him,
  Man, grown conscious of God within ?

Into the Silence let me enter,
  Pierce to the Spirit's inmost shrine,
There in the glow of the soul's hid centre,
  Bathe each thought till it burn divine !
So, let the change come swiftly, slowly,
  Earth-bound body, thou yet shouldst be
Cleansed, transfigured, a house made holy
  For That which thrills at the heart of me !

Un Seul Être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé

If any prayer prevail with Heaven, we said,
Ours is no empty breath :
Too tender is she, and too fair, to tread
The painful ways of death.

Anon we mourned as mocked of our desire,
And wept our fears fulfilled,
When her meek spirit, perfected through fire,
Passed where all pain is stilled.

So rare, so dear, so patient, so resigned,
That we, left void of all,
Search the dark ways of Providence to find
How such a loss should fall.

Yet gleaned from earth, and to the angels given,
God surely reaped thee, Sweet,
Because the all-golden harvest-home of Heaven
Had else been incomplete.

To Venice

SEA-STREETED City, once by Wordsworth hymned
In all too brief, but ever-during, song,
What after-minstrel but must do thee wrong,
And leave thee with thy brightness dashed and
dimmed ?
Yet while thy visible beauties, ocean-rimmed
And sky-encompassed, to our eyes belong,
And thy dead past reflected clear and strong
Lives, on the waters of the spirit limned,
So potent is the charm which o'er thee broods,
That tower and court and carven balcony,
Lagoon and gliding gondola—nay even
The pink-foot pigeons in their multitudes—
Wake memories that might haunt a soul in heaven,
And fire the very dumb to sing or die.

Christmas, 1898

" PEACE upon earth, goodwill to men,"
The burden of our Christmas cry—
Again we greet it, and again
Blush for our incredulity.
Ah, God ! that such a hope should seem
The figment of an empty dream !

In envious solitude apart,
Or leagued in lust, the nations sit :
Wrath in their eyes, and hate at heart,
With bristling guns they gospel it :
" Peace ! what hast thou to do with peace ?
War upon earth, and gain's increase ! "

Whose praise do priest and poet sing ?
Whose altars stand in all our coasts ?
With incense and with offering
We call upon the Lord of hosts,
And, calling, know not to our shame
Love, Truth, and Justice, are His Name.

O Love i' the heart Omnipotent,
O fire of Truth within the mind,
O Justice, who from heaven hast bent,
Mankind to save against mankind—
Great Trinity to whom we bow,
Be near us, nay, be with us, now !

Through all the centuries hath rung
No nobler challenge than to-day
Peals forth from that Imperial tongue
To bid the world's arm'd torrent stay.
Peal on, great voice from throne to throne,
Till Hate's last harvesting be mown!

And, England, if thou would'st not earn
Dishonour's self-envenomed sting,
Speak, or to lasting silence turn,
And cease this coward questioning
"When shall His Kingdom come, and when
Peace upon earth, goodwill to men?"

Aurea Ætas

O PARADISE of youth, the enchanted ring,
Round which we baffled outcasts idly rage,
Thrice happy folk who yet call Saturn king,
And still untarnished keep the golden age!

Fain would I loiter by the magic bound,
Though pass I may not, no nor tarry long,
So not too harshly in your ears may sound
The sigh-born numbers of an exile's song.

For you the sky-dome rears an ampler roof;
In you uncurdled by the frosts of fear
Hope springs, and ever spreads her watery woof,
A soul-reflecting current, swift and clear:

So clear and swift, the very sight has power
Sometimes within the breast to make us sigh
Or not to have out-lived that golden hour,
Or to win second birth before we die.

Us doubts disturb, or counter-aims confuse:
Ye—and your lesser strife let none despise—
Fight self-assured, and lose not though ye lose,
For the strong purpose is itself the prize.

Full oft befalls that what imports our need
Is the deed's doing, not the deed we do:
And, nobly followed, Nature's self may lead
To heights we know not, though by paths we knew.

So toil and sport, if but for glory's sake ;
  Win Scholar's meed, fight grimly for the goal ;
Grip bat, wield gloves, run, leap, and wrestle ; make
  Body and brain sound temple for the soul !

True, time will wake you from your glory-dream,
  Your name well nigh the fleeting hour forget ;
And ye to your own larger selves may seem
  The pigmies of a puppet-show : and yet

The shrine of honour built of boyish praise,
  The eager faiths our boyhood's bosom knew—
Say what amid life's shifting desert-ways
  Than that more steadfast, or than these more true ?

Heavens

THE heavens whereon our hopes are set,
What are they? beauty, pleasure, pride,
Ambition—all that never yet
Hath heart of man beatified:

Like wanderers in a midnight glen,
Whose every glow-worm is a star,
Till disillusion dawns, and then
Earthy and of the earth they are.

Who spend life's treasure to be filled
With that which is not but in name;
Who waste the spirit's wealth to build
Some folly-tower of human fame;

Or who to loftier ends aspire,
Yet aim but at the victor's crown—
One is the heaven they take for hire,
The hollow heaven of self-renown.

Who, steeped in bodily delight,
Forsake clear Honour's crystal well,
Or, trafficking in truth and right,
Ply commerce with the courts of hell,

Voluptuous heart, and scheming head,
That shape a heaven of craft or lust—
The dome they build is for the dead,
And pillared upon crumbling dust.

Yet some there be by instinct sure
  Led onward, of sublimer sort,
To seek whate'er is just and pure
  And lovely and of good report ;

Whose souls amid all human strife
  Like tranquil waters glide and shine—
The lapse of an unsullied life
  Drawn daily nearer the Divine :

For these, earth's discord to atone,
  Death's terror quell before they die,
That inward heaven which is their own,
  The heaven of heart-simplicity.

A Country Song for Children

Voice of winds and waters,
  Sunny smile of earth,
To earth's sons and daughters
  What are these things worth ?

Joy to hear them blowing,
  Joy to see them shine,
The deep joy of knowing
  Smile and voice divine.

Sound of swallows winging,
  Snowdrop in the sod,
All the Spring bells swinging
  With the breath of God.

Stars of fire above us,
  Blossom-stars below—
Say, shall He not love us,
  Who made all things so ?

Summer-burning meadow,
  Butterfly and bee,
All that haunts the shadow,
  All that loves the lea.

Gossamers that glisten,
  Leaves that flutter sere,
Sing to us—O listen !—
  Who have ears to hear.

Wrath and storm of winter,
  Havoc in the land,
When the great oaks splinter
  'Neath the blinding brand,

Clouds that clash in thunder,
  Clouds that fall in snow !—
Wait for Him, and wonder,
  Who made all things so !

Loveliness in Miniature

LITTLE maiden, fairy May
Fairer than all song can say,
Buoyant as the breeze of spring,
Blithe as butterflies a-wing,
Pure and fine the soul must be
That can thus ethereally,
And in earthly mould, express
All its own unearthliness.
Such the form sweet Echo had
Ere Narcissus left her sad,
Or young Eos, seen afar
As she paled the morning star.
Yet no transitory gleam
Like to these art thou, no dream,
Vision of fantastic birth,
But a very child of earth,
Hands and lips made humanly
Warm to touch and real to see,
Beyond fancy's wildest guess
Miniature of loveliness.

Like the sudden smiles that flit
(Spring comes back to think of it)
O'er the face of April, seen
But to vanish and have been,
So the swift vicissitude
Of each gay or pensive mood.
Sweet at rest thou art, and sweet
Roving, sweetest when the feet,
That will neither walk nor stay,
Dance adown the common way.
But how paint the winsome grace

Of the flower that is thy face—
With what beauty, say, begin ?
Dainty cheek, or dimpled chin ?
Little mouth we must not miss,
One wild rose-bud raised to kiss,
Nor the pearly seeds that show
When the lips' red petals blow.
Then the slender length, and slim
Elasticity of limb,
And white throat, and hardly guessed
Ripple of the girlish breast,
Fraught with dimly understood
Mysteries of maidenhood,
And dark hair that overlies
The wide wonder of thine eyes
Azure-orbed, divinely shy,
Radiant of eternity !

Love must come when thou art older,
Or the hearts of men grow colder,
And their eyes too gross to see :
Then may life's felicity
Crown thee ! but as now thou art
The whole world must lose its heart,
Child-enchantress, to thy lure,
Loveliness in miniature !

Of Janet, aged 5

To-day I saw your little Jan,
You two in India far away,
A dainty sylph that laughed and ran
Upon the summer lawns at play:
Dark-eyed with elfin locks of gold,
A medley quaint of grave and gay,
Of coy and forward, young and old—
I saw your little Jan to-day.

She paused amidst her paradise,
And lofty scorn was in her ken,
Half scanning with reluctant eyes
The monster, me. A sprite, a wren,
The shy beginnings of a girl,
A saucy nymph, a wayward fay,
A dewdrop prisoned in a pearl—
I saw your little Jan to-day.

Anon to battledore she sped,
Or turned with flying puss to fly,
Or seized the terrier by the head,
Unconscious of her cruelty.
Her pout is an incarnate kiss,
She smiles, a sunbeam strikes the may!
Her whim is law: you'll know by this
I saw your little Jan to-day.

No news I send you : 'tis the heart
  In exile hungers, not the brain :
What need to prate of Church and mart,
  Or Curzon and his coming reign ?
Of statesman and of diplomat
  The more that's said, the more's to say ?
Kingdoms may wane, but what of that ?—
  I saw your little Jan to-day.

Earth's Message to the Old

Eight hundred feet above the brine,
'Mid sylvan sounds and hushes,
And breath of bracken and of pine,
And scented heather-flushes,

O'er leagues of verdure, belts of blue,
Through weeks of buoyant weather,
From morning-dew to evening-dew
We twain have gazed together.

Where Leith Hill tower the landscape crowns,
And points a stony finger,
On Sussex, Surrey, Kent, the Downs,
Our eyes have loved to linger :

From Reigate round to Shoreham Gap
We've marked the spires up-peeping,
Fields, hamlets, hedgerows, like a map,
In mellow sunlight sleeping,

Tree-dotted uplands, pastures fair
As erst thy realm, Apollo,
The tilted hill-slopes bright and bare,
The shadow-softened hollow.

Lift we our eyes unto the hills
When grief or care oppresses,
Till the blood warms, the spirit thrills
'Neath Nature's kind caresses !

Or if the wings of ecstasy
Beat faint with life's long travel,
As still from bleaker heights we see
The sunny past unravel ;—

Hath time so wrought with us, that now
In our old festal places
We greet the mirth with troubled brow,
Or sigh with smiling faces ;

Yet whoso' sits at Nature's feast
In patient contemplation,
If not to rapture, wins at least
To rest and resignation.

So walk we armed for best or worst,
Content whate'er betide us ;
So to the last, as from the first,
Shall wisest Nature guide us ;

Who saith, " To yon empyreal heights
Lest I and mine should blind you,
Learn now life's visible delights
In heart to leave behind you :

No blinking of the bitter truth
Makes April of November ;
Hope's earth-born visions are for youth,
The old can but remember."

Poeta Suburbanus

THIS is where my songs are hatched,
Here I house me snugly
In a villa half-detached,
Architecture ugly.

If some know me not who knew,
Why be melancholy?
How should Aethiop change his hue,
Or a fool his folly?

On our right a City-clerk,
Most urbane of neighbours,
Earlier than the rising lark
In his garden labours:

Leftward, where above the wall
Peeps a Bearer's turban,
Children romp and parrots squall,
Such is life suburban.

Yet at dawn we hear the thrush
His old stave repeating,
And far bells at twilight-hush
Waft a vesper-greeting.

Yon white lilies not in pride
Lift their dainty noses,
And all June our southern side
Burns with roses, roses:

Nature for our own poor sake,
Not for wealth or station,
Loves us, and is fain to make
Tender compensation.

True it is, believed or not—
Poverty will prove it—
Though you cannot raise your lot,
You may rise above it.

Crœsus at our home hath curled
Lip of scorn, nor guesses
Richer wealth than half the world
Stored in its recesses.

Lofty hope and hoarded thought,
Treasures beyond telling
That could ne'er with gold be bought,
Crown our simple dwelling.

Wedding Rhymes

I

O BRIDE and bridegroom, while the sun
Shall cast a shade on your life's dial,
May many a cup of sparkling fun
Be poured from this Venetian phial!
Come, make the trial!

I'll warrant the deft hands long cold
That round the dainty waist first took it;
And, if the cork be scarce so old,
To our default pray do not book it,
But overlook it.

No bubble in the crystal spied,
But came from lips of lovers sighing;
And up and down its tendrilled side
(Fair omen) turtle-doves are flying,
There's no denying.

See too with what a jaunty air
It cocks those skinny arms akimbo,
As if protesting "I shall ne'er,
Cracked by an arrow from Time's grim bow,
Be laid in limbo."

Of its own worth, though all too slight,
'Twill plainly bate nor jot nor tittle:
Yet take it, in its own despite
An emblem of true love in little,
Though far more brittle.

II

On a day the wide world roaming,
Love, who sought for lovers true,
Weary of his quest came homing
To the hearts of you and you :

Some his fiery shafts affrighted,
Some were fickle, some were vain,
Till in happy hour he lighted
There to rest him and to reign.

Reign of Love, how much or little
Knows the world thy lustral power ?
Thou art not the brief and brittle
Impulse of an ardent hour ;

Not a flame now fierce, now dwindling,
As the blood beats high or low,
But a light whose mystic kindling
Is of heaven's eternal glow.

When the powers of darkness muster,
Should one ray from thee be shed,
Azrael, blinded by its lustre,
With foiled errand bows the head.

Those who find thee lose thee never ;
Throned amidst them there art thou
With thy glorious sign, *For ever*,
Writ in radiance on their brow,

Dazzling so men's souls with beauty,
They discern not hate or harm :
Peace thou art, and joy in duty,
And pure faith, and power to charm :

And beyond all past aspiring,
Present bliss, or boon to be,
The high crown of their desiring
Is to be controlled by thee.

Who so guard thy golden tether,
Nor reluctant own thy sway,
These may dare all worlds together!
Hail we then this happy day,

When, from idler dreams awaking,
Love, that maketh all things new,
Weaves the net that knows no breaking
Round the hearts of you and you!

III

When Love, from heaven alighted,
Touched with seraphic fire
These twain, divinely plighted
In holy, fond desire,
For utterance all too fleeting,
For mortal ear too fine,
The song of their hearts' beating
O'erflowed, methought, to mine—

"Arise, ye lowland dwellers,
Forsake yon arid plain—
The buyers and the sellers
Who barter souls for gain!
Mount upward, and mount hither,
Where thrill the finer sense
Such flowers as will not wither,
And spring we know not whence—

Where birds are angels singing,
And not a breeze can blow
But to the heart comes bringing
What none but lovers know :
For, wintry skies or vernal,
We keep our golden Prime,
And hear the bells eternal
Peal from the towers of time !
Come to this world of wonder
Where fraud and force are not,
Nor sweet lives torn asunder,
Nor holiest vows forgot—
Where weakness fears no capture,
Nor poverty disdain :—
Come, and of inward rapture
Inaugurate the reign !
Earth yearns, the heavens are willing,
And wind, and flower, and sod,
Await but man's fulfilling
Of the glad Dream of God ! "

" O blessèd ones abiding,"
I said, " in Love's sure hiding ;
Whose bark no billow tosses ;
Who from the visible goal,
New-gained, of your desire
Can still aspire
To enter, soul with soul,
That infinite Beyondness
Where only human fondness
Can fix her wandering star,
Housed as we are
Amid this turbid hum

Of Babel gains and losses,
Yet onward, upward pressing
To the one thing worth possessing,
God helping, and Love guiding,
We come to you—we come ! "

IV

Quoth he, " If ever Love shall come
And of my life claim masterdom,
I will him take, for joy or dole,
As the one sovereign of my soul,
And in that high surrender see
A very heaven of liberty.
And whatso' powers be mine to charm
From inward fear or outward harm,
With all that manlike in me stirs,
Making for godlike, shall be hers
Who kindled the refining fire
That hallows and uplifts desire
From strength to strength, from grace to grace,
Till in my mind's most holy place—
Love's loftiest consummation this—
I am not, and she only is :
A presence that to hearts made wise
Is mightiest of all Mysteries,
And token of the eternal gain
Which is man's birthright to attain."

Quoth she, " If ever at God's call
The yoke of Love on me should fall,
I'd wear it, till my days were spent,
As life's divinest ornament ;

And what within me noblest is,
Or outward fairest, should be his
Who set my beating heart a-tune
With roses and the breath of June,
And all the sweet world's witchery.
Yea, as their beauties are to me,
So would I seem to him ; a sight
To bathe his spirit in delight ;
A voice to touch the hidden strings
That thrill to fine imaginings ;
A power, when earthly cares oppress,
To ease him of their weariness,
And rouse to rapture at a breath !
The very self within me saith
' For thee, my lover, this could I,
Or, if I could not, let me die ! ' "

O thou that of all kings we ken
Art lordliest over maids and men,
That knowest the deeps of their desire,
To what far heights their souls aspire,
If haply the heart-whispered word
Of these thy votaries thou hast heard
Who wed within thy courts to-day—
Deal so with them, Lord Love, we pray.

V

For the vows divinely plighted
By these lovers, now united,
Set we all our soul-bells swinging
With a sweet and rhythmic ringing
In their high-built towers eternal,
That from dust of things diurnal

We may waft them with our chiming,
Tuning it, the while, and timing
To the deep and soundless chorus
Of the souls that loved before us,
Who have gained that golden morrow
On the sunward side of sorrow,
All their travail past redeeming
With the substance of earth's seeming!
From those high and holy places
May the Virtues, may the Graces,
To the loom of life descending
Weave them days of happy blending—
Warp of toil and weft of leisure
Patterned into perfect pleasure—
With all flowers of fine affection
Wrought for lasting recollection!
Roamers of Faith's magic mountain
May they find the enchanted fountain
That with bubbling bliss up-bursteth
For the lips of him that thirsteth,
Filling what can ne'er be sated,
By its own sweet want created!
So, beyond all risk of ranging,
Love, the chaste, the never-changing,
Whatso' mortal hap betide them,
In his secret haunt shall hide them,
Keep them whole and single-hearted,
Ne'er to be estranged or parted,
By the troth no time can sever
Welded and made one for ever!

VI

THE many seek delights that cloy ;
Ye twain are of the few ;
To others here and there a joy,
The sum of joys for you !

Henceforth, though seas or lands divide,
Fear ye no lonely hour,
So strong to keep you side by side
The Presence and the Power,

That welds the universe in one,
And o'er the heart hath sway,
Can see, though midnight blots the sun,
And hear, though worlds away.

Now what the singing laverock feels
At last ye learn, and what
The red heart of the rose reveals,
Though others mark it not ;

Over the spirit's deep abyss
Such error broods, men deem
As visionary that which is,
As real the things that seem.

You from this hour it doth behove
Among earth's seers to be—
Interpreters of heaven ; for love
Life's secret is, and he,

To whom that secret doth belong,
Alone perceives and knows
The Soul that is behind the song,
The God within the rose.

VII

Love's a jewel that will shine
  Fairest in a sombre setting :
Such a bridal hour is thine,
  Gay with hope yet unforgetting :
Smiles and tears, that meet together,
In the soul make April weather.

Sad and happy that thou art,
  Take this message I am sending
From a heart and to a heart,
  Wherein joy and grief are blending !
Joy was born to conquer sorrow,
April will be May to-morrow.

A 70th Birthday

(*April 9th*).

THREESCORE ten are the years I've told :
Time, say you, to prepare to die,
Soon to be missed and under the mould :
Haply, my friend, yet why ?
If all these decades—may God forgive !—
My days have been water poured in a sieve,
And I never, by knowing Him, learned to live,
Time to begin, say I.

Think of the hazardous paths I trod,
Heading for ruin, but forced to stay,
By the magnificent might of God
Ever from day to day
Rescued, renovate, born anew ;
Blindly doing what man may do
To baulk His purpose, and yet brought through !
Now for a saner way !

Look at the great unchanging laws,
Chemic, mechanic, and what beside,
Modes of the one Almighty Cause
In the bodies where we abide !
Operant e'en the while we sleep !
Kindred of those the soul must keep
Or ever to Life Eterne she leap,
To reign as the Spirit's Bride !

Teeming with thoughts that breed disease,
Drugged with delusions that make for death,
Too earth-bound, e'en upon bended knees,
To hear what the Spirit saith,

Casting in with the world her lot,
Fed upon that which sustaineth not,
How should the soul up-build, I wot,
A palace of Vital Breath ?

Strong enough are the Primal Powers
For suns and moons to endure thereby,
But not say you, for these frames of ours
That sicken and droop. Yet why ?
Here's God's whole Kingdom at hand within,
For thought to fathom, for faith to win :
Time to be rid of this nightmare sin,
And waken to Life, say I.

Christmas Rose

WHERE drooped the frail flower-children,
By Summer left behind,
I saw her white-robed sister
With fingers cold and kind
Around them for protection her windy raiment wind.

" Bide still with me, my darlings,
Nor frolic now, nor fret ;
Bide still, bide still," she whispered,
Snowdrop and Violet !
For many a month of morrows ye must your games forget.

" Within my folds content you,
Nor dare afield to stray,
But sleep, and still be dreaming
Of April or of May,
Till Mother comes to wake you when I am called away."

But lo ! as thus she warned them,
And turned to these or those,
I saw where singly daring
Her petals to disclose,
(For she had slept all summer) outsprang the Christmas Rose.

To Friends in the North

Blithe winds that sweep the moor, and take
  Their savour from the main,
Of power to soothe the spirit's ache
  And brace the weary brain :

Wild headlands whence the sea-fowl flit
  To cloud and storm akin,
Soft dells and shadowy dingles fit
  To shelter fairies in ;

The mystic blue immensities
  Where sky and ocean touch
Commingling—you have given us these,
  And these indeed are much ;

But more than all we learn from you
  He finds the best who finds
Hearts that beat only to be true,
  And truth-enamoured minds.

Castello di Urio, Lago di Como

HERE in Love's Temple, high-enthroned,
On Urio's castled seat,
By snowy-snooded Alps enzoned,
Lies stretched beneath my feet

From shore to shore, from end to end,
In heaven's own colours dyed,
The Lake beloved by Trajan's friend,
And hymned by Dante's guide :

I know not when so fair a dream
Drew back my spirits bar,
To loose her from the things that seem,
And lift to things that are.

Now, nearer if one turn to gaze,
Arrests the enraptured eyes
This lesser rock-hewn realm, where sways
A Queen of Paradise—

With terrace upon terrace crowned,
And linked above, below,
With footways winding as they wound
Five hundred years ago.

Hard by, a torrent storms in pride
Adown his bouldered bed,
Or, by the thirst of summer dried,
Drops dwindling to a thread ;

Upon whose dark and dripping wall
The lolling harts'-tongue hangs ;
For winter here doth windless fall,
Nor whets his frosty fangs ;

And see ! 'neath many an ivied edge
Bright speedwell gleams afar,
Or periwinkle lights the ledge
With star on azure star.

Here Guava blends both fruit and bloom,
And round the Cypress-towers,
All tender-pale against their gloom,
Wisteria winds her flowers,

Or clothes the naked wall, and clings
To ravish scent and sight,
And with Falernian bounty flings
Her clusters of delight ;

And e'en ere May's first maiden blush,
While April's yet to run,
Almost you'll hear the roses rush
To riot in the sun !

Behind yon gnarled and knotted root
Peering, you may surprise
Some Satyr straining in pursuit,
Some Faun with startled eyes,

Or pensive, for sweet fancy's sake,
Descend with footing slow
Those stately steps that lipped the lake
Five hundred years ago !

Of guarded fount I fain would tell,
And pebble-broidered lawn,
And yon slim tower whose clangorous bell
Beats out the birth of dawn,

Or how sweet Lario's pulses thrill
To meet the amorous air :
But stay, fond muse, thy faltering quill,
And cease thy needless care :

For lo ! the greatness and the grace
Of long-forgotten days—
Fair birthright of this princely place—
With all the love and praise

Of what, in nature or in art,
Must needs our worship win,
Shine mirrored in the eyes and heart
Of her who reigns herein.

" Non, si male nunc, et olim Sic erit."

HARK ! in this garden, 'neath a cloudy pall,
The nightingales are singing in the rain.
" Grief is a guest that will not long remain,"
They call to thee, they call.
Ah ! didst thou doubt that Love is over all ?
Here is a thought to ease thee of thy pain—
Nature despairs not, though her tears may fall,
The nightingales are singing in the rain.

At Riva

PELION on Ossa piled! These Alps awake
Old Titan memories: battlements sublime,
Rampart out-shouldering rampart as they climb
High o'er the dimpling blue of Garda's lake,
Eager for eminence! Look till your eyes ache,
Gaunt bones o' the world laid bare by storm and time
Emerge stupendous, measured not in rhyme,
Limned by no language tongue of man e'er spake!

Hush, then! and thrilled with a diviner sense
See, where the sun goes westering to his goal,
As by an archer's hand, with bow drawn tense
Aiming at earth, yon shaft of glory flung!—
Ladder of light the re-ascending soul
May mount by to the Eternal whence she sprung!

S.E.R.T.

So the long term of widowhood is o'er,
For thou hast joined him, and art travelled hence
Past mortal vision. We shall see no more
The broad high brow's benign intelligence,
The eyes and lips where truth and humour met,
The feet so swift, upon love's errand set.

God rest thee, dear one, at thy journey's close!
To pass from out the turmoil of mankind
Through death to life, through suffering to repose—
Such is thy guerdon, and to leave behind
For us that lose thee, through the darkened years,
Memories too sweet to be profaned by tears.

Time's Masterpiece

At Gladstone's birth to the slow-shaping Hours
From the Creator's mouth this mandate ran :
" Fill me the measure of a perfect man,
Erect, strong, fearless, of transcendant powers :
Grace, wisdom, learning—lavish all your dowers,
Goodness and greatness mixed, till span by span
Too high for friends to envy, foes to ban,
Above the tempests of mankind he towers."

Then Innocence and holy Awe they bring
To aid them, Honour, triple-mailèd Truth,
And Love, and righteous Ire, and tender Ruth,
With wide-winged Faith and Fortitude : and so
Nigh ninety years they laboured, fashioning
A monolith of manhood—now laid low.

Catharine Gladstone

(*June 19th*, 1900).

NOTHING is here for tears, or loud Alas!
Wed to a matchless mind, a godlike will,
His angel, beautiful in youth, she was,
And, beautiful in eld, his angel still.

'Twas weary waiting in the house of tears;
And when to eyes with age and vigil dim,
Morn, noon, and night, for two long lonely years
He came not, she arose and went to him.

Dawn fair then, O thou more than marriage day,
When now for ever—not, till death do part—
Troth-bound within their minster-bed we lay
The noble heart beside the noble heart.

General Symons

(*October*, 1899).

Alas, the pity of it! alas, the pain!
Left by the ebbing tide
Of his own victory, England's loss and gain,
Amid her foes he died.

O consummation that all grief beguiles,
And death itself endears—
To float fame-wafted to the Happy Isles
Upon a nation's tears!

Sonnet Introductory to " the History of the Victoria Cross "

" Il Campo et lo Exercito de' Cavalieri di Dio "

HERE, limned in lightning on the scroll of fame,
The record of earth's bravest ye may read—
Men to whose making fell such fiery seed,
Changed was their heart of flesh to heart of flame.
Whether of kings or cotter-folk they came,
These all, though scions of that immortal breed
That knows no country, doer alike and deed,
Exalt their nation, and adorn her name.

Nor lack there, by diviner frenzy driven,
Who, fate once foiled, athwart the hail-swept sod
Thirsty to save, the battle-ways re-trod
Triumphant. Lo ! to whom such grace is given,
These, yet on earth, be paladins of heaven—
The camp and army of the Knights of God.

Stars

(*November*, 1899).

STARS in the north ! world-fragments, that through space
Aeon on aeon ran their darkling race,
Strike fiery-white against earth's airy wall,
And luminous in dissolution fall.

Stars in the south ! dim souls, that could not shine
While life's dull orbit did their course confine,
Now devious hurled on war's opposing breath
Flash in a brief magnificence of death.

Privates of the Line

O RANK and file of England,
Bold Privates of her line,
Whose battle-deeds unnumbered
In deathless glory shine,
Too cold the lips that praise you,
Too few the eyes that weep,
Too oft with dull oblivion
In nameless graves ye sleep :
Untaught and roughly nurtured,
If faint in you the flame
Of loftier aspiration
That fires the soul to fame—
If life's best lore ye know not,
Yet this at least ye know,
To fight, to die for England,
When England bids you go.

We, nursed in high traditions,
And trained to nobler thought,
Deem, haply, death less bitter
Than life too dearly bought :
Sharp spurs have we to honour,
But ye without their aid
Rush on the deadly breaches,
And storm the barricade :
Though oft your lives belie you—
Rude hands and ruder lips—
At least ye shine transfigured
In death's apocalypse,
When by one deed that washes
Each soul as white as snow,
From merely man grown godlike,
To GOD at last ye go.

G. W. Steevens

" Every bit as good as dead, except that dead men
have no time to fill in." *

Cast upon stormy climes, his life was writ
In lightning, and like lightning vanishèd.
While to a proud and ruling race he cried
" Behold your Empire ! love and look to it,"
Sudden he spake no longer : he was dead.
Ah ! though the words wherewith he testified
Outlive the lips that spoke, is this, we ask,
His end who roamed the earth so fast and far—
Dull pause, blank void, for ever to lie still ?
Nay, but—who knows ?—with some sublimer task,
Swift courier-service on from star to star,
Not time but all eternity to fill.

* " From Capetown to Ladysmith." p. 128.

Ambulance Heroes

WORTHY are all in Country's cause who die
Of the white robe of immortality:
To fever-stricken couch or blood-stained sod
The call of Duty is the call of GOD.

But happier they, and higher is their praise,
Who, armed with mercy, thrid the battle-ways,
Haunt the sick air, and brave the cannon's breath,
Nor only slay not, but wage war with death.

A Pathetic Incident

GENTLE and brave amid the ranks he rode,
And felt the steed beneath him proud and true ;
Gentle and brave the steed beneath him trode,
And felt " My master's hand will guide me through."

And, hour on hour, through dying and through dead,
And lashed by rain from heaven, and hail from hell,
From morn to eve unscathed alike they sped,
But at the close of day the charger fell.

He saw the shattered limb, the heaving breast,
And eyes entreating aid he could not lend,
With kiss on kiss the velvet nozzle pressed,
And longed, yet loathed, its agony to end.

And heedless for a while how trumpet blared,
Or round him roared and flashed the fiery zone,
He who all day the battle's worst had dared
Now dared not brave the bivouac alone.

Then in one sob the parting word he spoke,
The loaded death with hand reluctant drew.—
O dear dumb friends ! O patient of our yoke !
There's many a heart, ye know not, aches for you.

By the Graves on the Veldt

SPARE them your pity, 'tis unmeet.
O deem not that they died in vain
Who in the hour of dark defeat
With thriftless valour strewed the plain !

Life freely given, and duty done—
What'er the hours shall mar or make,
The sum of all beneath the sun
Henceforth is nobler for their sake.

Spare them your honours, let them rest,
Let earthly fame forget them now :
No need of cross upon the breast,
Or laurel to renown the brow :

Though the bare Veldt around them spread,
Not all unnoted of the skies
There springs above each hero-head
The snow-white flower of sacrifice.

" Romane, Memento . . . Parcere subjectis "

When the arm'd might of England shall o'erthrow
The last rude barrier that her course delayed,
Shall baser thoughts by better be o'er-swayed
Nobly to deal with no ignoble foe ?
Shall Might and Mercy linked like Graces go
With Justice, naked and yet unafraid,
Or the ripe fruit of war be fruitless made
By retribution boundless as her woe ?
Nay, but of all woes this would be the worst,
To taint our tear-springs, desecrate our dead,
Making the cause for which they died accurst :
Strike mute with shame the slanderous mouths which
said
" Ye war for gold or empire " : make it true
That England's heart was nobler than they knew.

The Return of Lord Roberts

(*December*, 1900).

On many a field he played a peerless part ;
Now from his latest with new honours won
Home comes our hero, but with wounded heart,
A dauntless sire who mourns a dauntless son.

No haughty conqueror by his own bright star
Dazzled, red-flaming in a death-dark sky,
But humble-hearted as true heroes are,
And most made noble by humanity.

Ever where ambushed death a-lurking lay,
Or fortune matched the many against the few,
Sheer force and fire, he clove the battle-way,
Or did the desperate thing that was to do.

From the rent ribs of danger still he stole
The honey of success, nor staggered then
Sweet-surfeited. Master of his own soul
He was, and Master of the hearts of men.

Sorrow might strike him, but no sorrow long
Shake the deep-rooted manhood of the man :
Weakness is selfishness ; his soul was strong,
Armed with the hidden strength which all things can.

So when the high call sounded, there was he
Ablest in war-craft, apt for strenuous deed—
No nobler weapon in God's armoury—
Fashioned and tempered to his country's need.

Type of our knightliest who have fought and bled
And suffered, ever first upon the foe,
Yet gentle ever, and loved by those he led,
Such was the youth, and such the man we know.

Now grave and great, returning to lay down
His laurelled sword, haply no more to roam,
And wearing on white locks a threefold crown—
Age, grief, and glory—comes our hero home.

The Return of the C.I.V.

(*October 27th*, 1900)

LONDON is loud ! whose honour is she voicing
Afire with flags through endless miles of street ?
Mother of millions with one mouth rejoicing—
What is their glory whom she throngs to greet ?

England had need ; the sons of peace up-springing
Armed for her aid the battle-shock sustained,
From desk and till, from court and counter bringing
Valour of veterans, though to war untrained.

Shout ! for nor home nor love of gain could bind them ;
England had need, across the seas they sped :
Hush ! there are tears for those they left behind them,
Tears, and hearts breaking for the untimely dead.

Strife's bitter shoot, we graft it to our sorrow ;
Accurs'd of God earth sickens in its shade ;
Madness to-day, and death it bears to-morrow ;
Ah ! cut it down : why cumbereth it the glade ?

Peerless the deed they wrought : who dare misprize it ?
England had need, they served her passing well ;
Only the glory—let us not disguise it,
Slaughter is sorry work, and war is hell—

Not for foes vanquished, or red vengeance taken,
Splendour of sword-sweep, flash of battle-flame,
But for life jeoparded, life's ease forsaken,
Greet we these comers in their country's name.

Queen Victoria

Lay her to rest. O hour of grief and awe!
We say not England's happier days are done;
But who with that magnetic touch shall draw
And weld our world-spread Empire into one?
May He, who gave the mother, grace the son!

So simply noble that almost she made
Of earth-born sovereignty a thing divine!
Love was her law; by purity she swayed,
A power nor grief nor age could undermine—
Her throne an altar, and her hearth a shrine.

Queen, wife, and mother, peerless: even so:
And this shall be her fame in after-years:
Or alien or akin, or friend or foe,
Old jealousies forgot, old feuds and fears,
The whole earth wrote her epitaph in tears.

Lay her to rest. Her memory shall be blown
Like pure sweet air upon a tortured clime.
She made for peace, and passes to her own
With those who reign—O recompense sublime!—
Beyond the folding gates of Space and Time.

To Lord Kitchener

(1902).

DOER of deeds, word-sparer, whose firm will
Warped not with waiting though the time was long,
In those dark hours, when weaker hearts stood still,
Thine own beat steadfast, and we knew thee strong;

But few divined how generous and how wise,
Till Peace revealed thee for all eyes to scan,
And through the Warrior's seeming-cold disguise
Out-flashed in magnanimity the Man.

Frederick Temple

FALLEN is the Master-Builder! and how fill
The void? What new Zerubbabel appears
For this old Knight of God, whose eighty years
Slacked not the hands that would be toiling still?
Who thronged in youth to hear him—with what thrill
Recall we yet the harsh voice dipped in tears,
As, stone by stone, his living House he rears
Upon the bed-rock of the Eternal Will!

Rugged as Cato, nor less sternly true,
Beneath his brows, with solid thought o'er-hung,
There flashed twin fire-bolts that burned evil through:
For the World's ear Thor's hammer was his tongue:
But to Christ's simple folk, the old, the young,
How tender, those alone who learned him knew.

A Welcome to the King of Italy

(*November 17th*, 1903).

Cometh Italy to England? O ye winds be debonair,
Lest ye shame our northern welcome as his galleys
breast the blue!
In our heart is cloudless weather, be the firmament
as fair!
Land to land laughs out a greeting, let the skies
proclaim it too!
Let the winds and seas and skies proclaim it too!

From a folk we never fought with, from the shores
that are as home—
That as very home we sigh for, when the creeping
sea-mists cling,
From a clime whose summits hide in heaven, whose
feet are in the foam,
From a land of vine and olive, lake and torrent,
comes the King!
Of the Garden of all Europe comes the King!

King, renewer, and upbuilder of a Nation! for behold
How to nobler heights of being than from whence
her hopes were hurled
She arises, and to conquest more enduring than of old,
When Leviathan obeyed her, and she held a strug-
gling world—
When her hook was in the nostrils of the world!

Lo! her lamps that light the ages—bards and heroes
of the earth!
Numa, Cato, Africanus, Garibaldi—name on name—

Virgil, Dante, Galileo! Since her spirit sprang to birth—
Scattered chaos—what a kindling in the firmament of fame—
Stars that pale not in the firmament of fame!

Princes, Paladins, and patriots, and the men who strove in stone,
Wept in marble, prayed in colours that have turned the world to tears—
Aspirations, benedictions, seraph-faces zone on zone
Circling upward, winged with rapture, to the Soul that fills the spheres—
To be mingled with the Soul that fills the spheres!

Half the streams that slake the nations have from her boon bosom run:
Up then, England! and remembering that which flowed from her to thee—
Law and worship, art and glory—let us welcome the son's son
Of the King who freed his country to the country of the free—
From the country, to the country, of the free!

To President Loubet

O CHOSEN Leader of that chosen race
Of whom sprang chivalry and high-souled romance,
And all the arts of greatness and of grace—
Welcome invader, and unarmed for ill,
Who comest to spoil us of our heart's good will,
And win us with the charm of sunny France!

On many a field of yore our hosts have met,
Shoulder to shoulder some, some hand to hand,
Nobly in valour matched—matched noblier yet
Now when, the sea-mist from betwixt us blown,
Old feuds forgotten and old fears out-grown,
Neighbour greets neighbour, and land smiles on land!

Scotland's Greeting to King Edward VII., 1903

Not crownèd head, or sceptred hand alone,
Or empire bounded by the seas and skies,
Demands the homage which, to-day thine own,
From Scotland's heart doth myriad-voiced arise.

Because thou hast passed the gates of suffering,
So Heaven upheld thee greatly to endure,
And 'gainst a mightier foe didst play the King
Than erst thy Sire assailed at Agincourt ;

Because thine eyes into the eyes of death
For all his threatening front looked royally,
When Britain paled, and Europe held her breath,
And, save thine own, all thoughts were turned to thee—

To thee and her whose smile yet lights the land
As when she moved among the bridal throng,
Without whose wifely heart and woman's hand
Time scarce had turned our sorrow into song ;—

Because thou art linked with Scotland from of old,
And lov'st her purple moors and mountains grey—
For these things' sake, O Sire, no heart so cold
But fain would greet thee on thy triumph-day ;

And this sea-broidered city, rock-enthroned,
Whose pulse throbs deeper than the throbbing drums,
Roars from her torrent-throats a thunder-toned
" Rejoice, for the King comes ! "

L'Entente Cordiale

(*August 7—13th*, 1905).

Of old we fought for fiefs and sovereignties ;
We grudged each other's titles to be great ;
Our clashing fleets incarnadined the seas ;
And who was richer for our pride and hate ?

Now, sister-powers upon the midway main,
Guard we the new-found fair inheritance
Which all our greed of Empire could not gain :
For France at length wins England, England France !

Sir Henry Irving

So farewell, Irving! Punctual to the last
Great call that summoned him rehearse on high,
Who knows in what majestic drama cast
He turned from counterfeit of death to die?

Mighty magician, master of the spells
That move to grief or pity, love or scorn!
"The rest is silence"; but the silence tells
Of art ennobled and a stage forlorn.

Death of William Terriss

Pit, stalls, and gallery crowded ; the whole House
Ablare with music and ablaze with light,
Teeming with expectation ; a loud hum
Of hearts impatient for the curtain's rise
And that loved Actor, skilled in tragic show,
'Mid ear-enthralled, eye charmèd multitudes,
To 'scape the mimic dagger, or to die.
The curtain rose not, nor the Actor came :
For he was dead, their dear protagonist,
The gentle and the generous, and e'en now
Passing I know not to what awful stage
And solemn audience of the unseen world :
For as his groping fingers clutched the key
Of that familiar portal, in the dim
Death-ambushed entrance by a shadowy hand
From out the shadows stabbed and stabbed again,
He knew not fumbling with the door of heaven.

Japan and the Treaty of Portsmouth

More than a conqueror now she stands revealed.
He that hath read war's rueful histories
In this, Japan, thy sole surrender, sees
Thy crowning triumph ; who, by flood and field
Victor, to no base idol having kneeled
Of greed or glory, didst with seeming ease,
The golden mean accounting more than these,
On the full tide of fortune pause, and yield.

Thy loss herein were universal gain,
Would but thy Western teachers learn of thee
The strength, in strength, which can itself restrain,
Nor for pride only, or mere aims of State,
But, in humanest magnanimity,
Cares for the sake of greatness to be great.

Queen Alexandra's Homecoming

(1906).

MOURNERS of England, to whose bitter needs
Her hand brought ever anodyne, the heart,
That bled for yours, for her own sorrow bleeds:
Play ye your part!

Waft summer to her soul this wintry morn!
May she, whom death's dark herald bade to roam,
From loving hearts to loving hearts be borne
Homeward from home.

H.M.

But yester-month I had not seen his face ;
To-day that face can be no more forgot ;
Too full of something beyond time and space
To be remembered not.

Few words we spoke together, and those few
Not of the one dear solace souls may win ;
Only from something in his eyes I knew
What Presence housed within.

That his long since the all-healing antidote,
Needed no words ; his very glance sufficed ;
No eye e'er looked upon him but took note
That he had been with Christ.

So brave, so suffering, so with meekness crowned !
And with such patient smile he bore his cross !
Ah ! scarce I knew the jewel I had found,
Before I learned its loss.

To Ellen Terry

(*April*, 1906).

TIME, that writes ruin on each mortal brow,
The soul's creations hath no power to harm:
Their youth is stamped with an eternal Now,
And lapse of days but consecrates their charm.

So to our inward sense thou grow'st not old,
O gracious Vision! so this fiftieth year
But renders thee the fairer fifty-fold,
And fifty-fold more dear.

Joachim

How oft his vibrant bow now laid supine—
Mighty interpreter of the lords of sound—
Hath caught the dust-drift of our daily round
And danced it into mazy forms divine,
Making the dull seem dear, the common fine,
And our dead thoughts within to leap and bound
With intricate phantasies lost as soon as found,
And stainless left the floor-way of God's shrine!

Selfless and sacrosanct he held his aim
Unwavering, true as needle to the star.
For his initiate ear long deaf to fame,
And ever rapt from earth's discordant din,
The temple of music hung her doors ajar.
O who can grieve that he hath entered in?

Baroness Burdett Coutts

WHAT mockery, Death, to let thy scythe-blade sweep
Where was no power to reap !
For what is here that thou couldst hope to slay ?
Or how wrest wealth away,
Long since by one who wist the worth thereof
Translated into love,
And benedictions of unnumbered years,
And these fast-falling tears ?

God's millionaire and hoarder of true gold !
Treasure that grows not old,
Maugre thy forfeit laid on them that sleep,
She doth inviolate keep :
And this frail, venerable form, that lies
So low with lid-fast eyes,
Shall for thy darkening but the more appear
Imperishably dear.

Martin Sperling

With a thousand deaths behind him cast,
And a thousand yet to brave,
In the dark of dawn, in the biting blast,
He clung to the slippery hulk at last,
He slid with the sliding wave.
He clung, he clambered, he fought his way
Through the numbing snow and the blinding spray,
Till he came—he came to the living three
Dying amid the dead.
Ah! but they moaned to him, "Let us bide!"
"Nay!"—for the Christ within him cried—
"You come with me,
Or I die with you."
Thus he strove with the living few,
Till they wearily lifted each heavy head
And came as the hero bid.
Let the earth ring of it!
Let the sea sing of it!
That was what Martin Sperling said,
And that was the thing he did.

To Garibaldi

(*July 4th*, 1907)

IMMORTAL patriot! wert thou here to-day,
Of what forlorn hope wouldst thou lead the van,
Against what tyrant hurl thee to the fray,
Strike what new fetters from the soul of man?

Wouldst thou not bid the nations now at length
Break off the bondage of their mutual fear,
Looking to freedom as their Ark of strength—
Freedom, to friendship ever near and dear?

I seem to catch the far-off trumpet-call:
"Think not by mere armipotence to win,
And rush on greatness as men storm a wall!
For growth is of the silence from within.

"A mightier thing than might makes big the time:
E'en now with quickening hope the East is gray,
And the long-labouring darkness of your clime
Leaps with the dawn of a diviner day.

"Arm for the conquest of mankind! and know
That all your emulous hosts by shore or sea
Stand but for symbol and for outward show:
The soul of power is magnanimity.

"We strove of old, but not for self-applause,
Loved not the hurtling of war's iron wing;
We fought as champions of a righteous cause,
To crown with peace our country and our king."

* * * *

Yea, noble spirit ! and is the hope too vast
  That, when the world grows weary of her pain,
A mightier Victor may be crowned at last,
  And earth inaugurate Emmanuel's reign ?

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman

'Mid all the clamour of conflicting cries
So clave he to the cause he counted true,
That e'en from lips, to whom it seemed not wise,
Fell the rare tribute rendered but to few—
" The head we doubted, but the heart we knew."
Now to his memory let this record rise :
" Here on the field of honour claim we can
A fearless fighter, yet a foeless man."

To the King at Rugby

(*July 3rd*, 1909).

THOUGH fitting words on utterance vainly wait,
For this thy gracious presence, Sir, to-day
Within these walls, to greatness dedicate,
A holier homage than of words we pay.

For Temple's star on Rugby rose so fair
Beyond the power of time or tears to dim,
That loyalty to thee, how deep soe'er,
Needs must be deeper that thou honourest him :

Whose reverent service thou wilt scarce forget,
What time, with age-enfeebled hand and slow,
The crown of Empire on thy brows he set,
Not, haply, unbeloved of thee : for lo !

He seemed his name's embodiment, a shrine
Hewn of sheer truth, whose kindling from the skies
Burned in his speech, and through his deeds did shine—
Blest in both worlds who, living so, so dies !

General Wolfe

(*September 13th*, 1909)

A HUNDRED years and fifty Time doth tell
Since up the heights of Abraham, this day,
Wolfe with his heroes dared the pathless way,
And won it, and heroically fell,
Whence sprang to birth beyond the Atlantic swell
England's great heritage. Yet, this side the spray,
Of sculptured art or dedicative lay
No record to renown him! Is it well?

"Who runs?—the foeman? Then I die content."
So spake he, though his heart's half-breathed desire
Did to the Muses' gentler heights aspire.
Now through the ages beacon-like he flames,
By none out-splendoured in that firmament
Whose galaxies of light are glorious names.

The Death of King Edward the VIIth

(*May 20th*, 1910)

"Τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια."

DEATH cannot rob him of the crown he wore.
So just a King, so manful and humane,
That not in visible realms alone, but o'er
The universal heart he seemed to reign ;
And alien eyes that ne'er beheld his face
Find earth the lonelier for his empty place.

Amid the splendours and the toils of State
With lowliest need he knew to sympathise ;
Without assuming greatness, he was great,
Without the arrogance of wisdom, wise ;
Ennobling his high office to the end
As patriot peerless, yet the whole world's friend.

Ah me ! with him commit we to the dust
A smile that charmed to death presumptuous pride,
A single faith that Envy's self might trust,
A matchless aim, a hope that never died,
A challenge that, pray Heaven, from throne to throne
Shall peal till earth's last battle-trump be blown.

Children of God shall they be called, I trow,
Who make for peace beneath the travailing sun ;
To whose inheritance eternal thou,
Edward, Peace-maker, hast thy birthright won.
With that sublimest benediction blest,
Enshrined in all men's memory, take thy rest.

To Florence Nightingale

SAINT Florence, Lady of the lamp of love,
What wouldst thou with earth's praise, whose puny spark,
Matched with the flame thou filchedst from above,
Scarce pricks the dark ?

If the world's worship of thine angel-ways,
If anguished lips that hailed thee half-divine,
If dying benedictions, count for praise,
That praise is thine.

Thy very name, that doth sweet music mean,
Must sweeter grow with every passing year.
Dear, while in sight, we deemed thee, but, unseen,
How doubly dear !

Holman Hunt

O Cross, thy Shadow, and O World, thy Light—
  Darkly he limned them, seeing not the whole:
Now is his vision orbed to perfect sight,
  Now is the shadow lifted from his soul!

J. C. S.

Arnold and Arnold, Stanley, Landor, Clough,
Temple and Benson—servants of the lyre,
Or teachers, lit with apostolic fire—
Renown our Rugby. Souls of hero-stuff,
Sons of Hephaistos, making plain the rough,
Or purging the foul, ways, of sensual mire,
Their very memory doth sweet breath suspire,
Embalming the dead past! It is enough.

Yet mind I one, wont as their peer to walk
Beneath yon elms, who tuned no songless harp,
Still quickening the dull air with trancèd talk,
One soul with Wordsworth. Fain were I to see
Within these walls some votive wreath to thee,
Singer of sweet Traquhair, John Campbell Shairp.

A Lesson from the " Titanic "

See in great moments how we cast aside
The fear-spun cloak of hatred, foe to foe—
Poor outworn rags of rivalry and pride !
A soul-fraught vessel to destruction hurled
Sets free the mighty heart-stream of the world
Unlocks its frozen flow.

Brute Nature triumphs ; yet some gain we reap
From her remorseless doom, all said and done,
If, deeper than the unfathomable deep
Where that heroic remnant met their end,
To the bed-rock of being we descend,
Where the whole world is one.

General Booth

HERE was a man of Herculean might !
To hoary-headed eld from earliest youth
He recked not but to wrestle for the Truth
With every monstrous thing that loathes the light.

He lifted from the mire and made rejoice
Drink-sodden and depraved who lay supine :
Intoxicating these with Heaven's new wine,
He ruled them into righteousness. His voice

Was like the sea-wind : when it blew abroad
Men's souls in the salt wilderness astray,
Deafened and blind with their own sound and spray,
Came multitudinous rolling in to God !

Scant not his claim, nor grudge the title given,
Nor mock the means wherewith (O deed of worth !)
He commandeered the very waste of earth
To weld an Army of the Knights of Heaven.

Coronation Day

(*June 22nd*, 1911)

LET us be reverent though with hearts elate!
We stand upon the brink of holy things,
Beneath these human pageantries of State
Veiling allegiance to the King of Kings,
Whose power the Kings of earth impersonate.

The time is long since tyranny's decease,
And worthy homage whom we hail to-day;
Worthy that Sire whose memory must increase
As more and more are counted kingliest they
That guide their people into paths of peace—

'Gainst ignorance and vice that lead the van.
Wherefore with soul uplifted, lips that sing,
Beseech we Heaven—the while, as mortals can,
We crown the visible presence of our King—
To crown the King that reigns within the man!

On The Declaration of War

August 24th, 1914

Not for passion or for power,
Clean of hands, and calm of soul,
England at this awful hour
Bids her battle-thunders roll,

That crown'd arrogance may quail
And brute-force be backward hurled—
Lest the hypocrite prevail,
Lest a lie should win the world ;

Lest she see the trustful weak
Trampled by the perjured strong—
That her arm may help to wreak
Justice on red-handed wrong,

Till the hierophants of fear
Cease, beneath the darkened sun,
To boom out in Europe's ear
The grim gospel of the gun.

So, to meet yon myriad host
As we muster, land by land,
Witness Heaven—no braggart boast—
That for righteousness we stand !

In the dread impending hour
Heedful of that warning word,
" ' Not by might, and not by power—
By My Spirit,' saith the Lord."

The Charge of the 9th Lancers

(*August 24th*, 1914)

FLING the fame of it far and wide!
O Mother, arise and praise thy sons!
Wherever an English banner floats,
Tell with pride
Of the Lancers' ride
Into the gaping thunder-throats
And hell of the hidden guns!

Toss the tale to the listening stars!
Just a handful against a host,
Hot to punish, athirst to save,
Straight as bound for the hurdle-bars
Rode they, reckless of least or most,
Into the fierce mephitic breath
Sputtering fury, dinning death!
Charger and rider one wild wave—
Proud horse-billow with human crest—
Hurled on the bellowing reef anear!
"Gallop, my beauties!" and on they pressed,
Fetlock to fetlock, breast by breast,
Clothed with thunder, mocking at fear,
Lightning-hooved at their lords' behest!

Mother, arise and praise thy sons!
Hero-names of a thousand years
Hail them Paladins, claim them peers.
Be thou glad of thy dauntless ones!
Tell with pride
Of that morning-tide,
England honoured and death defied—
How they rode for thee, side by side,
To silence the hidden guns!

The Marseillaise

Sons of the Motherland, arise !
The day of glory dawns on high !
Up floats defiant to the skies
The blood-stained flag of tyranny !
Do ye not hear how hard at hand
The ruffian soldiers roar and ramp ?
Into your very midst they tramp
Your sons to ravage and your land !

To arms, my countrymen !
Form up to meet the foe !
March on, march on, their tainted blood
Shall make our furrows flow !
March, march we on, their tainted blood
Shall make our furrows flow !

What would this recreant slavish herd
Of traitors and confederate kings ?
For whom were these vile chains prepared,
For whom, long since, these iron rings ?
For us, my comrades, ah ! the shame !
What fury in your breasts should burn !
'Tis you they dare in thought to spurn,
And, as of old, for bondsmen claim !

To arms, my countrymen ! &c.

What ! we within our homes to cower
While alien troops bid come and go !
What ! mercenary hordes have power,
To lay our gallant warriors low !
Great God ! by caitiff-hands shall we

Beneath a conqueror's yoke be bowed,
And take these vile oppressors proud
As masters of our destiny ?

To arms, my countrymen ! &c.

Quake, tyrants, and ye traitors too,
Scorned and abhorred of all mankind !
Full soon their retribution due
Your parricidal plots shall find !
Each man's a soldier you must fight,
And, should our youthful heroes fall,
From her own bosom earth would call
A warrior-brood for battle dight !

To arms, my countrymen ! &c.

O love of country, Power divine,
Guide and uphold our vengeful hand !
Freedom, dear Freedom, still combine
With those who for thine honour stand ?
Beneath our flags let Victory
To wreak thy burning wrongs arise,
And, dying, may the foeman's eyes
Thy triumph and our glory see !

To arms, my countrymen !
Form up to meet the foe !
March on, march on, their tainted blood
Shall make our furrows flow !
March, march we on, their tainted blood
Shall make our furrows flow !

SELECTED PAGEANT POEMS

The Sherborne Pageant

(Edward VI. Episode)

Fons Limpidus

O SHRINE of the silver waterspring, name renowned
When Saxon and Dane strove mightily which should win,
Once Queen of the west, and once by a King re-crowned,
Almost with the birth of England didst thou begin!
How reckon the tale of summers that o'er thee rolled
Ere Roger the mighty upreared thy Norman hold?
O Sherborne, won from the wilderness who knows when?
For the days that are past we bless thee, Mother of men!

What though thy cloisters have echoed to saints and kings,
And Ealdhelm loved thee, and Alfred about thee played,
From heroes perished a seed as of heroes springs,
Thy crown is a crown of youth, and it doth not fade:
And musing on many, thy later-born, through thee
From fetters of self or of craven fear set free,
Made holy of heart, and famous with sword or pen,
For the days that are now we bless thee, Mother of men!

Nor lacketh there yet to comfort us saint and king;
The soul of our Alfred standeth at God's right hand,
Yet haply as sweet shall the name of Edward ring,
Who trims thee, a lamp for ever to light the land.
For us, we are born, we perish, our days are few;
Thy days are many, to-day thou art born anew;
Immortal amidst our threescore years and ten,
For the ages to be we bless thee, Mother of men!

Triumph Song

Down the ocean of the ages, over seas that broke and boiled,
Or where belts of tropic slumber lulled the dreaming halcyon's breast,
Where the stabbing reef thrust upward, where the warping current foiled,
We have tracked the good ship Sherborne to this haven of her rest.

Oak of England, pine of Ida, for the poet's palm may vie;
Never sown was lustier timber than the axe of Ealdhelm felled;
Never keel was straightlier fashioned, never mast so neared the sky;
Never canvass whitelier woven was by fairer gale impelled.

Storm and stress of youth were over when once more she took the main;
By the star of truth she steered her, led by captains of renown;
She has thrid the shoals of knowledge, and again and yet again
She shall flap the self-same pennon, she shall tread the surges down.

Men of might who thronged her bulwarks, men whose fame the world knew well,
Men whose fame the world ne'er heard of—and who knows the happier lot?—

These and all who thought and wrought for her, or
fought for her and fell,
Are the nearer to our heart of heart because we
name them not.

With the tribute of our praises, words of worship and
of love,
Though not half be said or sung for her that in our
breast we bore,
With twelve hundred years beneath her, and the bend
of heaven above,
Down the ocean of the ages lo ! we launch her forth
once more !

Dover Pageant
Henry VIII. Episode

Choragus

LET us be glad for the splendour and strength of Kings,
The lords of armies, the doers of doughty things!

Chorus

Apparelled in praise and mailed in might they ride,
And the time seems long till their lust be satisfied.
Their laughter is as the sea's, their wrath like fire,
And who shall hinder them of their heart's desire?
They daunt the main, they measure the earth with a rod,
They carry the scales of Doom and the sword of God;
The lives of a thousand men are a little thing,
So they be sped of their mind's imagining;
They covet and have, they ask and take no nay,
For the word in their mouth is mighty, to save or slay.

Choragus

Let us be glad for the labours of lowly men,
The tillers of earth, the tamers of field and fen,
The wielders of hod and hammer, of axe or wedge,
The harbour-builders, the hands that delve or dredge!

Chorus

They deepen the dyke and bridle the swelling brine,
They set the beacon-tower on the hill to shine;
They fashion the limber oar, and shape the sail,
They curve their keels to weather the roaring gale,
They weather the roaring gale and know no fear,
For little in life have they, to deem it dear;

Choragus

They wrestle and swink and starve, and ask not why,
And the days seem weary-long till they come to die.

Chorus

Let us now look, and ponder upon these things,
The travail of lowly men, and the pomp of Kings!

Chorus

Before the Final Tableau

BRITONS and French, with hearts and hands
Knit ye the league of the neighbour lands!
Doubts and fears to the deep be hurled!
Freedom and friendship win the world!
We have conquered each other enough to prove
That that which must conquer at last is love:
For a loveless man is a lifeless clod,
And the spirit of love is a spark from God:
O Love-star, rise on the night, we pray,
And lead, lead on the diviner day!

The nations have heard, they have heard a call,
The voice was the voice of the Lord of all:
His mould is ready, His furnace hot,
He hath men's hearts in the smelting-pot:
For a time is coming—ah! let it come!—
When the tiger in man shall be quelled and dumb,
When the shuttle of death shall ply no more
'Twixt the hands of the weaver whose warp is war,
And envy and hate no more have sway,
For the former things shall have passed away.

The Triumph Song

ALL hail to thee, dauntless Dover, in ages beyond our ken,
The dread of the wild sea-rover, the door of the lion's den!
New foes thou wert always facing, but never, we trust again
Shall shrink from thine arm's embracing the vessels of outland men.

No longer aloof we screen us, or fend from imagined foes;
What erst was a gulf between us a watery highway flows:
Go, envious isolation, where that which begat thee goes,
For the cloud 'twixt nation and nation is lifting, no more to close.

But what of the word
Our ears once heard
That, or ever the ages cease,
King Arthur himself should homage pay
To a mightier one of wider sway,
Whom, North, South, East, and West obey,
Lover and Lord of Peace?
O winds, be whist, O waters, dumb!
The King is coming! the King is come!

And ye that hearken the while we sing,
Look up, and behold a wondrous thing!
For these her daughters from oversea,
That follow in Dover's company,

Forty and four
The wide world o'er,
And mothers of mighty sons to be—
These from the ends of the earth who came,
Share her honour, and bear her name—
With home-felt rapture around her throng,
And thrill to the close of her triumph-song !—

O fair and majestic haven, couched under the sea-cliffs white,
That title upon thee graven, INVICTA, was thine of right,
For one with the waves thy glory, and one with the winds thy might,
And the web of thine endless story is woven, by day and night,
Of ocean's infinite yearning, criss-crossed with the to-and-fro
Of a thousand keels returning, a thousand that outward go !
From the frowning towers above thee to the fringing foam below
To think of thee is to love thee, as all that have known thee know.

Bury St. Edmunds

The New Age

HARK ! the music of the ages,
  Dirge and paean, masque and chime,
Loves and hates—heroic rages—
  Deeds tyrannic, deaths sublime !
    Slowly, sadly,
    Swiftly, madly,
  Swells the mighty march of time.

Thrones and faiths are falling, changing,
  Vanishing like morning dew !
Hark ! the unseen fingers ranging,
  Mingling false and mingling true—
    Joy and sorrow,
    Night and morrow—
Weave the fugue of old and new.

Still for ampler knowledge yearning,
  Life we think with discord teems,
Only in the end discerning
  That which is from that which seems.
    Heaven will show it,
    Earth shall know it,
When she wakens from her dreams.

Retrospect

THINK gently of our moving show—
  Not idly and for naught
Forgotten forms of long ago
  Within your vision brought.

They passed not with the passing day,
  The great ones that are gone ;
Their bodies fell beside the way,
  Their spirit leads us on.

Who thrills not to the sacred flame
  Of that sublime desire
Which gave to earth a quenchless name
  To heaven a soul of fire ?

Eyes dull to many a meaner thing
  Must yet behold with awe
This " Sanctuary of the King "
  This " Cradle of the Law,"

Made glad as in a glass to see
  Around her crumbled shrine
The men who lived for liberty,
  And knew the soul divine.

Yes, there is something that abides
  Behind the dust and din,
When history like a veil divides,
  And shows the form within.

From passion unto passion hurled,
And tossed from pain to pain—
The long delirium of a world
That, waking, shall be sane.

Turn from this arid crust of things,
Loud power and flaunting wealth,
To where aeonian water-springs
Whisper of hidden health :

Think amid clash of race and sect,
The strife of caste and clan,
" Thus doth the unseen Architect
Evolve His perfect plan."

So haply, as we turn the page
Of dedicative art,
These visions of a bygone age
Shall vitalise the heart.

York Pageant

A.D. 597

Semi-Chorus I

WHERE are the old gods' altars, where
The primal powers of earth and air—
Jove, and Apollo lord of light?—

Semi-Chorus II

Gone, like the dreams of yester-night.

Semi-Chorus I

Where is the faith in which men died,
Or lived, for love of the Crucified,
Suffering gladly scathe and scorn?—

Semi-Chorus II

Flown with the mists of yestermorn.

Semi-Chorus I

What are the gods they bow before?—

Semi-Chorus II

Saturn and Woden, Friga, Thor.

Semi-Chorus I

Trow ye, then, they are come to stay?—

Semi-Chorus II

These shall be soon with yesterday.

Semi-Chorus I

Who be those that they welcome home?—

Semi-Chorus II

Daughters and sons set free from Rome,
Happy, with all their tears and teen
Past like the dews of yester-e'en.

Semi-Chorus I

What are the tidings that they bring,
Or what the note of their triumphing?—

Semi-Chorus II

Death defeated, and sin's dark fear
Blown to the winds of yester-year.

Warwick

Ave Atque Vale

THE revels o'er, the actors passed away,
Of this fair pageant, say,
This ebb and flow of human times and tides,
What most with us abides ?

Not the high deeds and legendary state
That erst made Warwick great ;
No, nor King Avon riding o'er the lea
Mantled in poesy,

And waving, as he floats by tower and town,
His banner of renown,
Nor all the dead re-risen, nor all the praise
Of those heroic days :

But rather that all life beneath the sun
Is in all ages one,
And the deep sense that of each moving scene
Ourselves a part have been.

Where is the gulf of space, O soul of man,
Too vast for thee to span ?
Or when the time, how long soe'er forgot,
When thou thyself wert not ?

Colchester

Chorus of Druids before the Final Tableau

Choragus II

WHAT spoil of the spreading ages have ye to their tops who climb ?
And where are the fruits once gathered, that hung from the boughs of time ?

Choragus I

Or ye that have ploughed Life's furrows, what wage of your work remains
But longing and heavy labour, and earth-hued harvest-stains ?

Semi-Chorus I

Since we in our dark delusion stood awed at the sun's eclipse,
New realms to the earth are added, new flight to the sea-borne ships,
We have wrung from the hills their secrets, and harnessed the hidden springs,
And how if we chain the lightning, and challenge the air with wings !

Semi-Chorus II

Nay more, for of inward greatness what growth since the days began !
What light of emancipation now dawns in the face of man !
And softly we hear up-swelling, but never again to cease,
The hum of the swordless armies whose leader and lord is Peace.

Choragus II

Not idle, I wot, your boasting: this Mother, our hearts invoke,
Hath sown thro' the earth fair cities, and love is their only yoke:
Soon thrall and lord shall be brothers—

Choragus I

But tell me of lord or thrall
Who tastes of his life's fulfilment, ere foiled by the end of all.

Full Chorus

Though hard be the strife before us with blindness of heart and brain,
Though ages be heaped on ages ere the Slayer himself be slain,
The One that is All grows clearer to souls that have eyes to see,
And nearer and ever nearer the Knowledge that maketh free.

The Triumph Song

Choragus I

ARISE, O Muse of Colchester, and strike a loud refrain!
Our hearts and lips are trembling to rehearse the triumph-strain!

Choragus II

But the sum of all her triumphs can never be told in rhyme,
For the Ages are her minstrels, and her melodist is Time.

Semi-Chorus I

See the mighty ones approaching! let us greet them as they come,
Though before their marching multitudes our eloquence be dumb!
Look on Kymbeline the valiant, King of Britain's ancient state,
By his son in soul out-splendoured through the Faith that conquers Fate!
Hail, Caràdoc, foiled, defeated! how through earth thy glory rings,
From the bonds of Rome returning to proclaim the King of Kings!

Semi-Chorus II

Lo! where Claudius rides in triumph, while the thronging crowds make room,
In his heart the lust of living, at his ear the hiss of doom!
See the pomp of priest and senate, see the oxen's steaming breath,

And the bay-bedizened maidens, and the captives led to death!
The dancers and the lictors see, with laurelled axe and rod,
And the incense-teeming censers, as they hail him for a god!

Choragus II

Such are Kings, who at their bidding deem the bolts of fate are hurled,
And behold they are but levers in the hand that drives the world!

Semi-Chorus I

On Boadicea bend your gaze, that heart of living flame,
The wonder of all woman-hood, and Rome's eternal shame!
Nor moth of envy can corrupt, not tooth of time impair,
Her seamless constancy of soul, her splendour of despair!

Semi-Chorus II

Comes Coel, too, and Helena, afire with love divine,
Whom brave Constantius took to bride, who bare him Constantine.
Comes St. Osyth and her Saxons, Ingvar, Ubba, and the Danes!
Cometh Ecgwyn with King Edward crowned, and their attendant Thanes!

Choragus I

But the spokes of time spin onward, and the Norman Lords are here,
And their breath is fire before them, and they rule by force and fear,

Full Chorus

Of the monarchs and their minions see the proud procession glide,
Girt with monks and priests and barons in one seething human tide!
E'en as fierce conflicting waters chase each other to the main,
Come Plantagenets, and Tudors, and the Stuart's baneful reign,
Till bewildered eyes grow dizzy, as we view them from the verge!

Choragus I

But from out the battling billows say what stately forms emerge,
Tall as Tethys and her sea-nymphs?

Choragus II

Can ye question who are these?
'Tis Colcestria, Rose of Essex, and from many lands and seas,
Those that spring from her, and cling to her, and share her race and name,
Hither homing to their Mother's arms, her triumph to acclaim!

Full Chorus

Ah! we knit the words together, and we blend them, chord by chord,
With the soul-dividing harmonies from voice and viol poured,
But the sum of all her triumphs can be never told in rhyme,
For the Ages are her minstrels, and her melodist is Time!

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